

**NOAA FISHERIES PROPOSES NEW SHARK MANAGEMENT MEASURES
IN DRAFT AMENDMENT 1 TO
THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN
FOR ATLANTIC TUNAS, SWORDFISH, AND SHARKS**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) proposes to amend regulations governing Atlantic shark fisheries. The intent of these actions is to rebuild overfished and prevent overfishing on Atlantic sharks consistent with the National Standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) and the results of the 2002 small coastal shark (SCS) and large coastal shark (LCS) stock assessments. These proposed new regulations would affect all aspects of shark management.

In this action, NOAA Fisheries proposes to: revise the large coastal shark rebuilding plan; outline a procedure to prevent overfishing of finetooth sharks; revise commercial quota levels; implement regional and trimester quotas; eliminate a commercial minimum size; revise recreational retention and size limits; establish handline and rod and reel as the only authorized gears in the recreational shark fishery; remove deepwater and other sharks from the management unit and continue data collection only; retain the existing regulations on the prohibited species group but establish criteria by which to add/remove species to/from the group; allow strikernet gear only in the shark gillnet fishery; implement a time/area closure for bottom longline fishing in the mid-Atlantic region from January through July to protect sandbar and dusky shark nursery and pupping areas; require vessel monitoring systems on shark bottom longline and gillnet vessels to enforce time/area closures; require the use of non-stainless steel hooks and the possession of line clippers, dipnets, and dehooking devices on vessels with shark bottom longline gear; require bottom longline vessels to move 1 nmi after an interaction with a protected species; update and revise essential fish habitat identifications for species whose stock status has changed; provide criteria to increase or decrease essential fish habitat for individual species based on special needs; and develop a separate display permitting system for sharks apart from research or exempted fishing permits.

Written comments on the proposed rule must be received by 5 p.m. on September 30, 2003. Public hearings on the proposed rule will be announced in a separate notice.

This FAX notice is a courtesy to shark fishery participants to help keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact Karyl Brewster-Geisz, Heather Stirratt, or Chris Rilling at (301) 713-2347 or Greg Fairclough at (727) 570-5447.

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Dated